JUSTICE LEAGUE

TASK FORCE

29
NOV 95

PRIEST
BERNADO
WALLACE

DEADLY REUNION!

THIS IS DESPERO.
IMPRINTED ON HIS DESTROYED CONSCIOUSNESS IS THE SYNTHETIC INTELLECT OF L-RON, FORMER FOOTSLAVE OF MANGA KHAN.
BEFORE THAT MELDING, L-RON'S TOUGHEST ASSIGNMENT WAS FINDING A DIET COKE ON ANDROMEDA.
THESE DAYS, HE HAS FAR MORE ON HIS MIND.

--AND THE CONGRESSIONAL SUBCOMMITTEE HAS KILLED THE BILL INTRODUCED TO PROTECT THE AREA WILDLIFE.

--ALTHOUGH MARINE BIOLOGISTS WARN THE LARGE SCHOOLS OF DOLPHINS WILL BE ALL BUT WIPED OUT BEFORE NEW LEGISLATION CAN EVEN BE INTRODUCED--

THE CONSERVATIONISTS HAVE TO START AT THE BEGINNING, TRY TO FIND A CONGRESSMAN TO SPONSOR A BILL BANNING OFFSHORE MINING--

PROLOGUE: MEANWHILE, DESPERO...

THE DRILLING PLATFORM IS CAUSING DEATH AND SUFFERING TO THOUSANDS OF INNOCENT LIVES.

DOLPHIN LIVES.

LIVES L-RON DOES NOT SEPARATE OUT FROM HUMAN LIVES.

INNOCENTS ARE INNOCENTS.

AND THE GUILTY BEWARE.

BUT ARE THESE MEN GUILTY? DO THEY REALIZE THE SLAUGHTER THEIR WORK HAS EFFECTED?

GUILTY OR INNOCENT--?

L-RON USES DESPERO'S TELEPATHIC THIRD EYE TO SEEK OUT A VERDICT.

THOOM!!

WHAT WAS THAT--?

GET THE GAME OFF--PUNCH UP ZONE SEVEN--

YEAH-- GOT IT--

--OBOY--

THEY KNOW.

THEY DON'T CARE.

THEY MUST BE STOPPED.

GUILTY.

FTHOOM

PROTESTORS COULDN'T STOP THEM.

THEIR GREED IS ALL-CONSUMING.

CONGRESS WOULDN'T STOP THEM.

SOMEONE MUST DEFEND THE INNOCENT.

THAT'S WHAT BEING A HERO MEANS.

L-RON TARGETS THE TORQUE ASSEMBLY BENEATH THE PLATFORM. NO ONE WILL BE HURT, BUT THE PLATFORM WILL BE DEFANGED--

--Eh--?

PRRFWWWWWW

FWWWWW

F-WHOOM

YYAAHH!!

EEEARRGH!!!

PAKT

PAKT

PAKT

PAKT

FWHOOSH

WHO--?

WHO CAN WAIT. SO CAN HOW.

LIVES ARE AT STAKE.

CERTAINLY NOT INNOCENT--

--BUT NOT WORTHY OF DEATH.

FFWOOO

ONE JET LOST.

ONE JET RUNNING WILD.

MM!!

FIVE MEN DYING.

THANKFULLY, DESPERO'S THIRD EYE HAS TELE-KINETIC ABILITIES--

KLACK

SPLOK

--OPEN!! GET IT OPEN!!

I'M TELLIN' YOU--

--THERE'S SOMETHING OUT THERE!

GET THESE GUYS INSIDE--TO THE INFIRMARY BEFORE HE SHOOTS AGAIN!

BUT-- THE PURPLE GUY SAVED THEM--!

25...

NOT THE PURPLE GUY--

SO...

...WHAT HAVE WE HERE--?

--HIM!!

Oh, TELEPATHY. NICE.

NICE SAVE ON THE TERRAN BACK THERE, TOO.

STATE YOUR NAME AND PURPOSE.

Oh, THAT'S EASY. MY NAME IS--

--GAMMERON!

MY PURPOSE--?

FWWWM

GEE--

ZMMM

K-ZAP

--I THOUGHT THAT WAS OBVIOUS.

pinched

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, JOHN JONES WAS A POLICE DETECTIVE. IN THAT TIME HE'S MADE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF QUITE A FEW PEOPLE.

PRIVATE EYES... SECURITY ANALYSTS... BAIL BONDSMEN...

HI. HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

...BOUNTY HUNTERS.

I AM WELL, THANK YOU. IS GLENN IN?

AND, WHO MAY I ASK IS CALLING--?

AN OLD... ACQUAIN-TANCE.

PRIEST ▼ WRITER RAMON**BERNADO** ▼ PENCILLER CHIP**WALLACE** ▼ INKER ADRIENNE**ROY** ▼ COLORIST
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COVER BY RAMON BERNADO & CHIP WALLACE

JOHN!

MY GOD, MAN, YOU'RE A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES!

WHAT'S IT BEEN-- TWO--THREE HUNDRED YEARS ?

TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-SEVEN YEARS, TEN MONTHS, THREE DAYS, GAMMERON.

NOT LONG ENOUGH. I GOT YOUR MESSAGE, GLENN--

--YOU HAVE EIGHT SECONDS TO TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE DOING ON MY PLANET.

YOUR PLANET ?

GEE, JOHN, LAST TIME I CHECKED, YOU WERE BORN ON ***MARS.***

HANGING WITH THESE ***TERRANS*** MUST HAVE RATTLED YOU A BIT.

WHAT, GAMMERON ?

RETURN ON A WARRANT, JOHN. IT'S FOR ONE OF YOUR PEOPLE-- ***DESPERO.***

THE XANTHCANS ARE PRETTY PISSED.

DESPERO'S MIND HAS BEEN ***WIPED,*** GLENN. HE'S AS GOOD AS ***DEAD.***

GUY DON'T LOOK SO DEAD TO ***ME,*** JOHN.

THERE'S A ***SYNTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS*** IMPLANTED ON DESPERO'S MIND. HE'S QUITE HARMLESS.

YAH.

LOOK, JOHN, THERE ARE DIRECTIONS AND A LANDING PERMIT. YOU CAN GO TO THE TRIAL, IF YOU LIKE, AND EXPLAIN ALL THAT "*SYNTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS*" STUFF.

I GOTTA BRING HIM IN.

GLENN-- HE'S NOT YOUR MAN.

JOHN, LET ME EXPLAIN IT TO YOU.

I'M A BOUNTY HUNTER, NOT A JUDGE. THAT STUFF'S TOO *DEEP* FOR ME.

I BRING BIG RED IN, THERE'S 80,000 CREDITS. I DON'T *CARE* WHO'S LIVING INSIDE HIS BRAIN OR WHAT-NOT.

GLENN, LET ME EXPLAIN IT TO *YOU*--

--TOUCH MY FRIEND AND I'LL TOUCH YOU -- ***PAINFULLY.***

LOOK... JOHN... WE GO BACK A LOTTA YEARS.

I THINK I OWED YOU THE RESPECT OF A *COURTESY CALL*--

--BUT, BOTTOM LINE? DESPERO'S GOING DOWN.

NOW, I'D RATHER NOT HAVE TO MIX IT WITH YOU.

I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN A LITTLE ***NUTS*** SINCE THAT BUSINESS WITH YOUR *WIFE*--

WHAT ABOUT MY WIFE...?

WHAM

=GHAAAGG--!!=

TEMPER, J'ONN... TEMPER.

I KNOW HOW TO GET TO YOU.

I KNOW WHERE YOU *LIVE.*

DON'T MAKE THIS ANY HARDER THAN IT NEEDS TO BE.

I'LL GIVE *YOU* THE SAME ADVICE.

IT IS A DREADFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY MARTIAN.

BENSALEM, PENNSYLVANIA...

SO, THERE WE ARE. *THIS* IS HOW IT ENDS.

NEARLY A DECADE AGO, WHEN I FIRST *MET* J'ONN, WE WERE *PEERS*. *HE* FOLLOWED *MY* ORDERS--

--ALONG WITH *SUPERMAN*--AND *GREEN LANTERN*.*

*IT'S TRUE. SEE JLA #92 --Roo

AND NOW, AFTER I SPEND ALL THOSE YEARS IN *LIMBO*, SUDDENLY J'ONN STARTS TREATING ME LIKE...LIKE A *KID*.

LIKE I CAN'T EVEN *CUT IT* FOR THE *REAL* LEAGUE--I HAVE TO DO *QUALIFICATION LAPS* IN J'ONN'S DINKY "*TASK FORCE*."

THEN I MAKE *ONE* MISTAKE, AND HE *DUMPS* ME!**

**LAST ISH --Roo

MAN--NEVER KNEW A MARTIAN COULD HAVE SUCH A TINY EGO--

HEADS *UP*, GOLDILOCKS--

--YOU'RE HOGGIN' THE *ROAD*!

MYSTEK!

WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?

WELL, *Duh*, I *LIVE* HERE. I SNIFFED YOUR *MAG SIG*, AND THOUGHT I'D COME BE *NOSY*.

"*MAG SIG*"?

MAGNETIC RESO-NANCE SIGNATURE, DOPE. WHAT ARE YOU, HOOKED ON PHONICS?

OR ARE YOU JUST *ESPECIALLY* LAME FROM THAT *THOROUGH* CLOCK CLEANING J'ONN GAVE YOU.

SHUT UP.

Ooh, AREN'T *WE* EXTRA BITTER SINCE WE GOT OUR *BUTT KICKED*.

LOOK, KID, *GET LOST*, OKAY? I GOTTA SEE A MAN ABOUT A HORSE.

HECK WITH THE *HORSE*, WILL. IF I WERE YOU, I'D STOP BY FRANKLIN MILLS--

--BUY SOME *KNEE PADS* FOR ALL THAT *BEGGING* YOU'LL HAVE TO DO TO GET BACK TO THE *TEAM*.

THE HELL WITH "*THE TEAM*," MYSTEK.

SURE, SURE, SURE.

YOU'RE *DYING* TO BE BACK, WILL. AND SO IS THAT *OTHER* GUY--

"--THE GUY YOU CAME TO PHILA-DELPHIA *TO SEE.*"

--BUT MARKETING NEVER GOT BACK WITH THOSE FIGURES--

--WAITING FOR A MEMO FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD--

--THIS WASN'T MINE. NO, THIS ONE WAS NOT MINE--

SHOOT ME. STAB ME. MAKE ME DIE.

LOOK-- GUYS--

--RELAX, OKAY? I DON'T REALLY *CARE* WHO OKAYED WHAT.

WE'RE A *TEAM.* IF WE CRASH AND BURN, WE DO IT *TOGETHER.* NOW, TOY FAIR IS--WHAT --TWO WEEKS--?

FIVE DAYS.

NEVER MAKE IT.

NO SWEAT.

WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO CAMP OUT AROUND THE CLOCK FOR A FEW DAYS--

--BUT WE'LL FIND THE O/S BUG AND SHIP THE MODULE ON *TIME.*

"...and a partridge in a pear tree..."

WHATEVER IT IS, WILL, I DON'T HAVE THE TIME.

NICE TIE, RAY. VANDAL SAVAGE PICK IT OUT?

NICE *SHINER,* WILL. YOUR *DATE* GIVE IT TO YOU?

LOVELY.

ALMOST AS NICE AS *MY* OFFICE IN BOSTON.

WILL, I'VE GOT A GAME CARTRIDGE-- A *MAJOR RELEASE*-- THAT'S NOT GONNA SHIP ON TIME.

I'VE GOT AN OFFICE FULL OF STAFFERS TRYING HARDER TO COVER THEIR BACKS THAN FIX THE DAMNED PROBLEM.

SAY WHAT YOU CAME TO SAY.

VANDAL SAVAGE HIRED YOU TO RUN THIS DIVISION--

IT'S COMPLETELY LEGITIMATE, WILL. CHECK IT OUT.

--AND YOU ACCEPTED BECAUSE YOU NEED VANDAL TO HELP YOU BEAT *DEATH MASQUE.**

WELL, YOU DON'T HAVE TO STAY ANY LONGER. I'LL HELP YOU WITH MASQUE.

YOU CAN QUIT.

VERY FUNNY. GET OUT.

I'M NOT WITH THE TASK FORCE ANYMORE--I'M COMPLETELY SERIOUS, RAY--

COMPLETELY SERIOUSLY, THEN-- *GET OUT.*

RAY-- LISTEN TO ME-- YOU CAN'T TRUST SAVAGE--

HEY-- *MEATBALL*--

--I CAME TO YOU-- REMEM-BER--?!*

*RAY #14--Roo

WE WERE PARTNERS, WILL-- REAL *FRIENDS.*

YOU TURNED YOUR BACK ON ME.

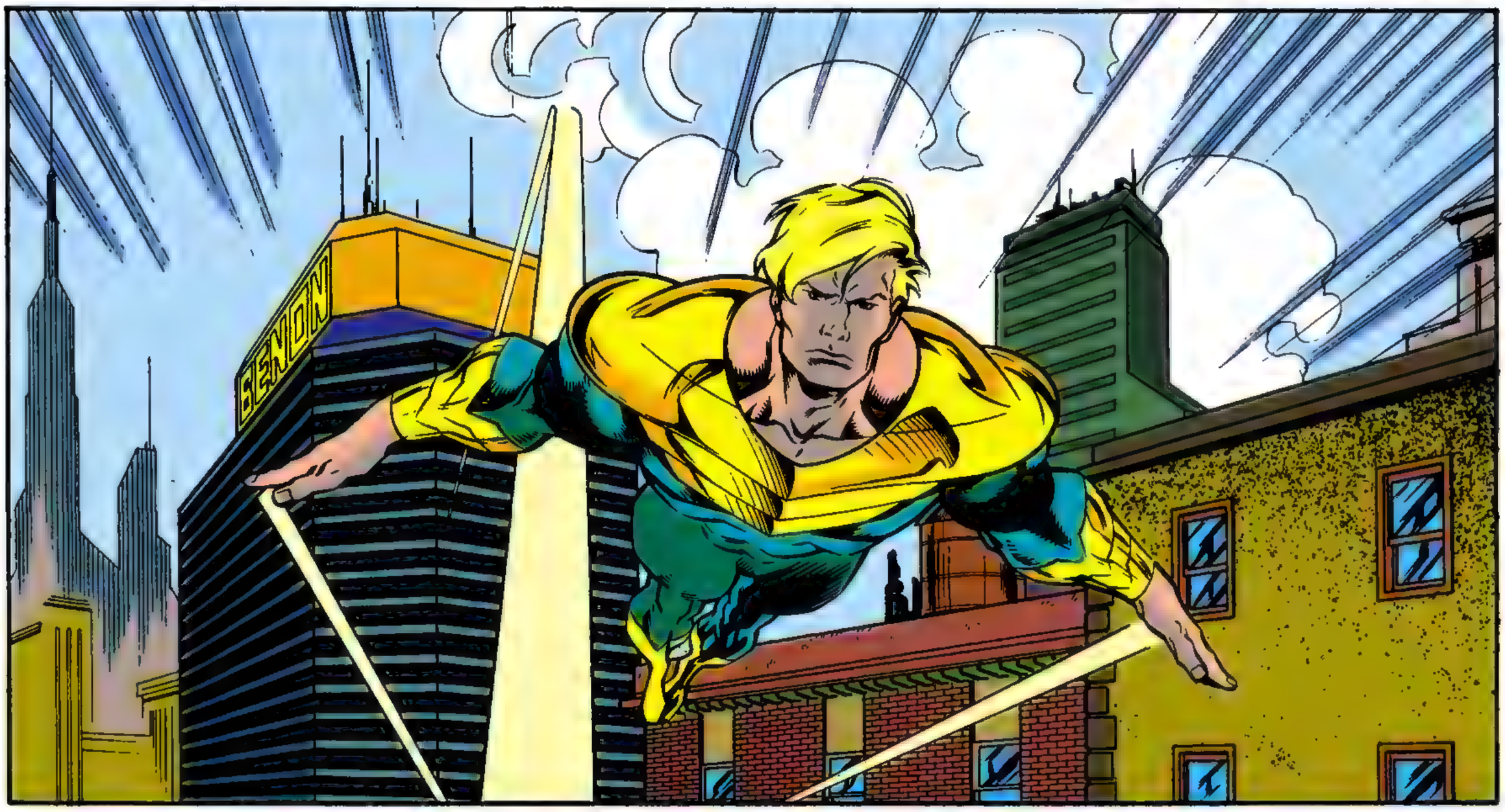
I GIVE AS GOOD AS I GET, PAL.

I'M NOT YOUR PAL.

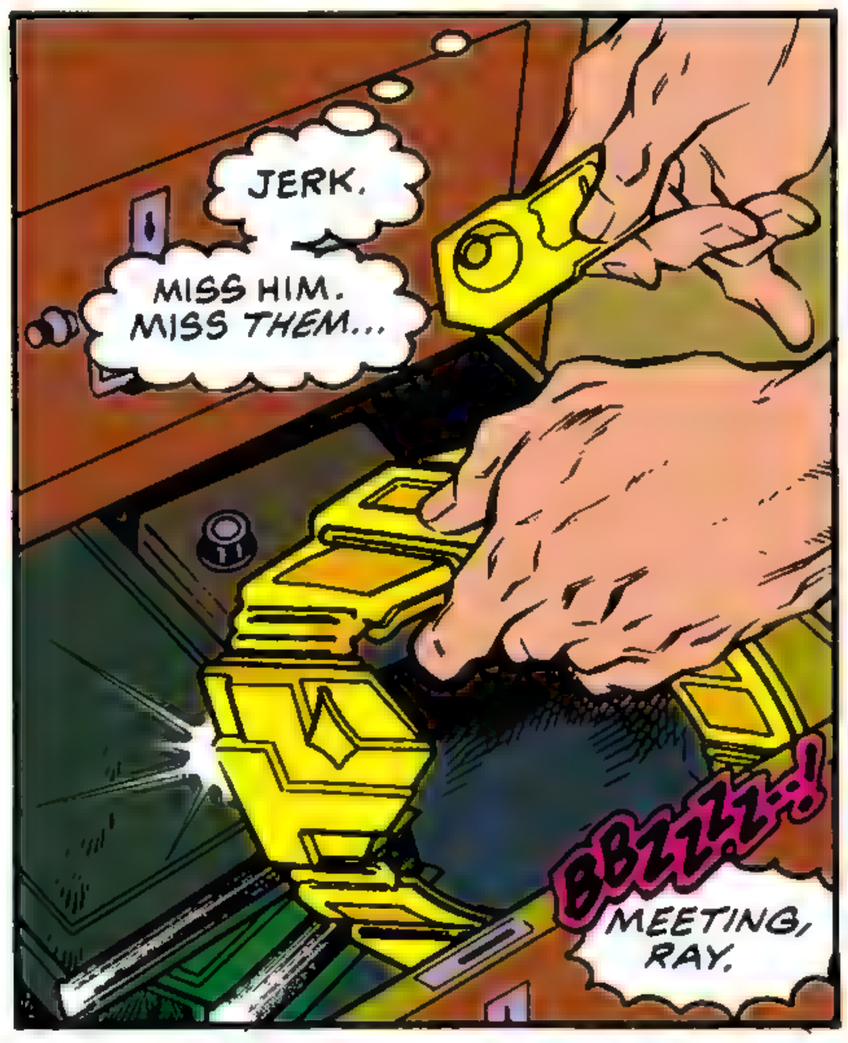
I SEE I'M WASTING MY TIME.

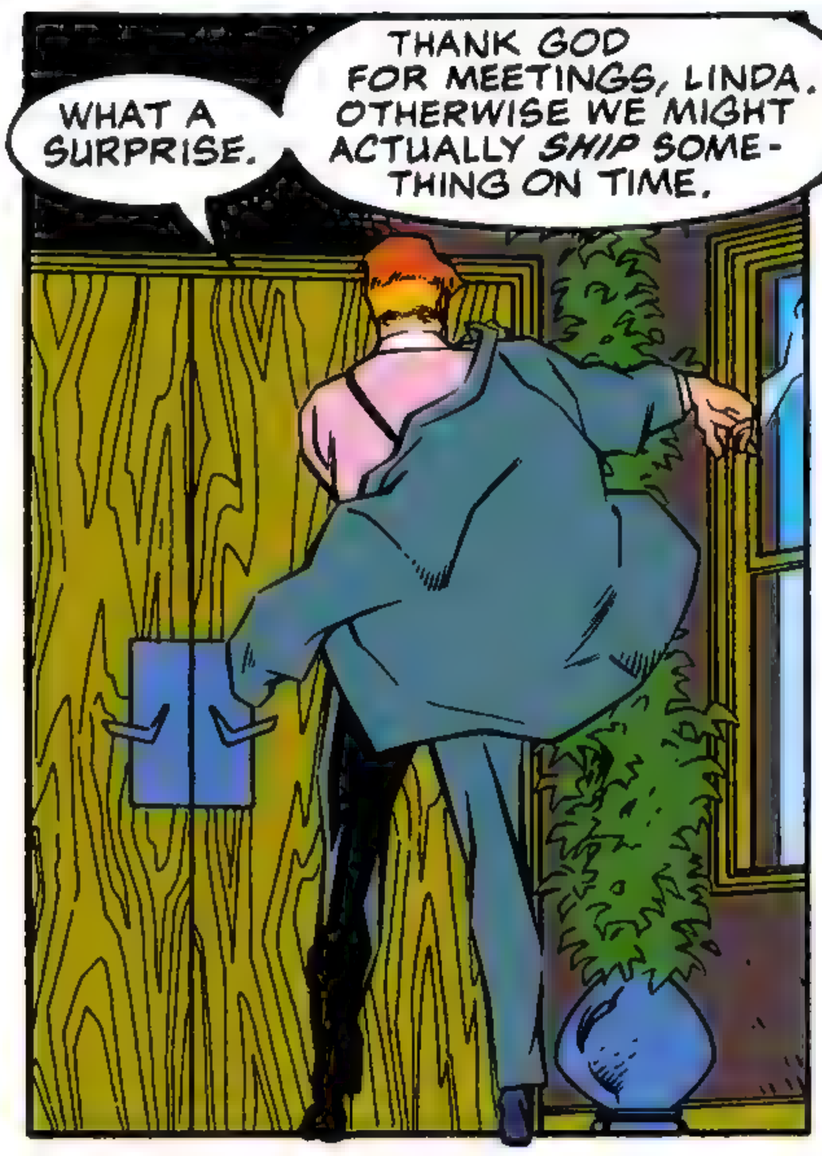
LOOK, RAY, WE'RE BOTH ALL DONE WITH THE TF. WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO BE THERE FOR EACH OTHER NOW.

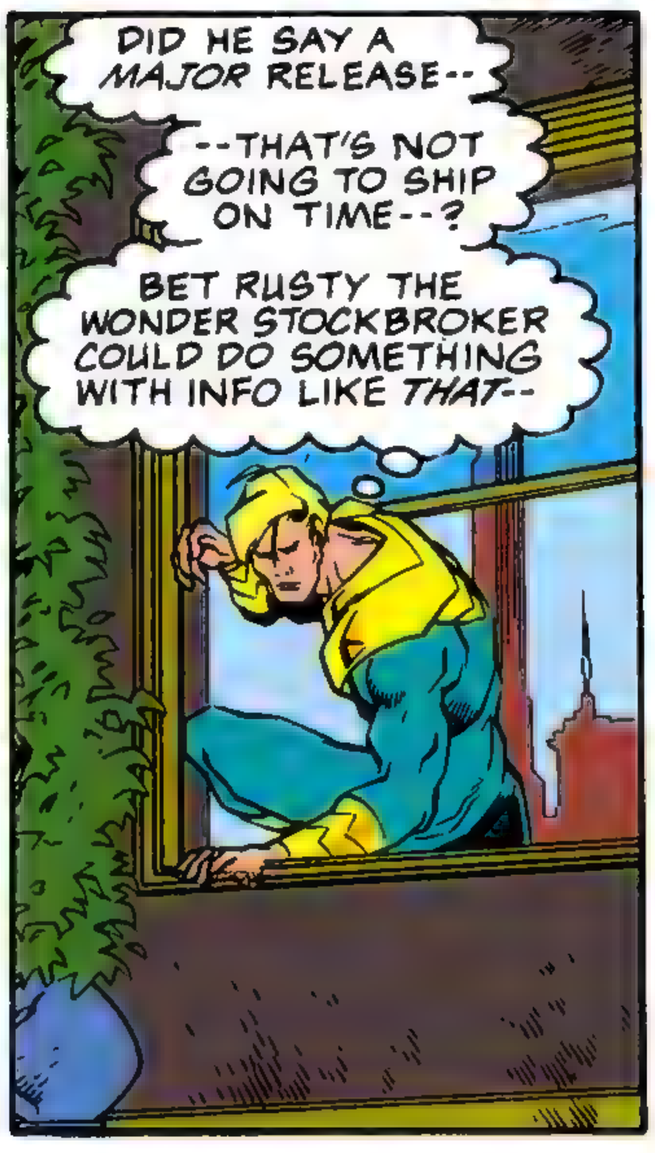
CALL ME WHEN YOU'RE DONE RUINING YOUR LIFE.


SENON

WHY DOES EVERYONE WANT TO BE MY DAD--?
WHAT--DO I HAVE "NEED A DAD" TATTOOED ACROSS MY FOREHEAD--?


JERK.
MISS HIM. MISS THEM...
BBZZZ-!
MEETING, RAY.


WHAT A SURPRISE.
THANK GOD FOR MEETINGS, LINDA. OTHERWISE WE MIGHT ACTUALLY SHIP SOMETHING ON TIME.


DID HE SAY A MAJOR RELEASE--
--THAT'S NOT GOING TO SHIP ON TIME--?
BET RUSTY THE WONDER STOCKBROKER COULD DO SOMETHING WITH INFO LIKE THAT--

THIS IS DESPERO.

HE HAS THE SOUL OF A SAINT, THE HEART OF A BEAST.

AND RIGHT ABOUT NOW, L-RON IS WISHING HE'D NEVER HEARD THE NAME "DESPERO."

YES, BABY. YES, BABY. BABY, I *KNOW*--

--NO, NO, NO, NO--IT'S NOT THAT. IT'S *NOT*.

You Haul-It

LOOK, I *KNOW* WE PLANNED THE TRIP TO YOUR MOTHER'S. YES, BABY. YES. I UNDERSTAND.

I AM *WORKING*. UNDERSTAND? WORK. PAYS THE BILLS ON THAT ROTATING PHASE MODULATION UNIT YOU NEEDED SO BADLY.

NO, I DON'T MEAN TO BE SNIDE. LOOK, BABY--

--uh, LESLIE, I'LL HAVE TO CALL YOU BACK.

SOMETHING'S COME UP.

WHAAAAM!

I WARNED YOU.

YOU JUST WOULDN'T LISTEN.

YOU NEVER DO.

FR-WAAAMM!

SSCREEE!

NOW SUFFER THE CONSE-QUENCES.

J'ONN... J'ONN... J'ONN...

YOU ALWAYS *DID* UNDERESTIMATE ME. NOW, LOOK HOW *MESSY* THAT GETS. LOOK, J'ONN--

...MY OLD BUDDY, YOU NEVER CHANGE, DO YOU?

--I KNOW YOU'VE GOT SOME *CASE* WITH THE PURPLE GUY.

A FRIEND OF YOURS LIVES IN HIS BODY.

THERE, SEE? I GOT THE CONCEPT.

BUT I *CAN'T* WALK AWAY, J'ONN. NEVER COULD.

NOT MY STYLE.

HEY-- LOOK--YOU STILL DO THAT "*VARIABLE DENSITY*" BIT--

--HOW CONVENIENT FOR A *NEGATIVE ENERGY FLUX* DISCHARGE!

YEEEAARRGGHH!!

KNEW YOU'D GET A *JOLT* OUT OF IT.

AAAIIIEEE--!!

RELEASE L-RON *NOW*, GAMMERON.

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE *ME*--

THAT'S ENOUGH!!

--WHAT THE-- HELL--?

THIS IS A *VIRTUAL REALITY* REPRESENTATION OF MY *CONTROL CENTER*, GAMMERON.

I AM NETWORKING THE THERE OF US *TELEPATHICALLY*, AND I'VE FOUND SUCH PNEUMONIC REPRESENTATIONS USEFUL.

SO YOU'RE *L-RON*-- THE GUY LIVING INSIDE DESPERO.

IN A WAY. THIS IS HOW I PREFER TO SEE MYSELF.

BACK IN YOUR HOLD, I'VE MANAGED TO BURN AWAY PART OF THE RESTRAINT--

--HOLDING DESPERO'S FORM, I COULD, AT THIS POINT, *EASILY* BREAK FREE, KILL YOU AND STEAL YOUR SHIP--

--WHICH, AS I KNOW TOO WELL, WOULD BE DESPERO'S NATURAL INCLINATION. HOWEVER--

--NEVERTHELESS SHALL I *RESPECT* YOUR DECISION.

I AND MY TASK FORCE WILL ATTEND THIS "*TRIAL*," GAMMERON.

BE WARNED, THOUGH-- SHOULD THERE BE *ANY-THING* SHORT OF A *FAIR TRIAL*--

--I AM *L-RON*. I AM TOTALLY *INNOCENT* OF DESPERO'S CRIMES. THEREFORE IT IS MY CHOICE TO RETURN WITH GAMMERON--

--AND *STAND TRIAL*.

CAN'T WAIT.

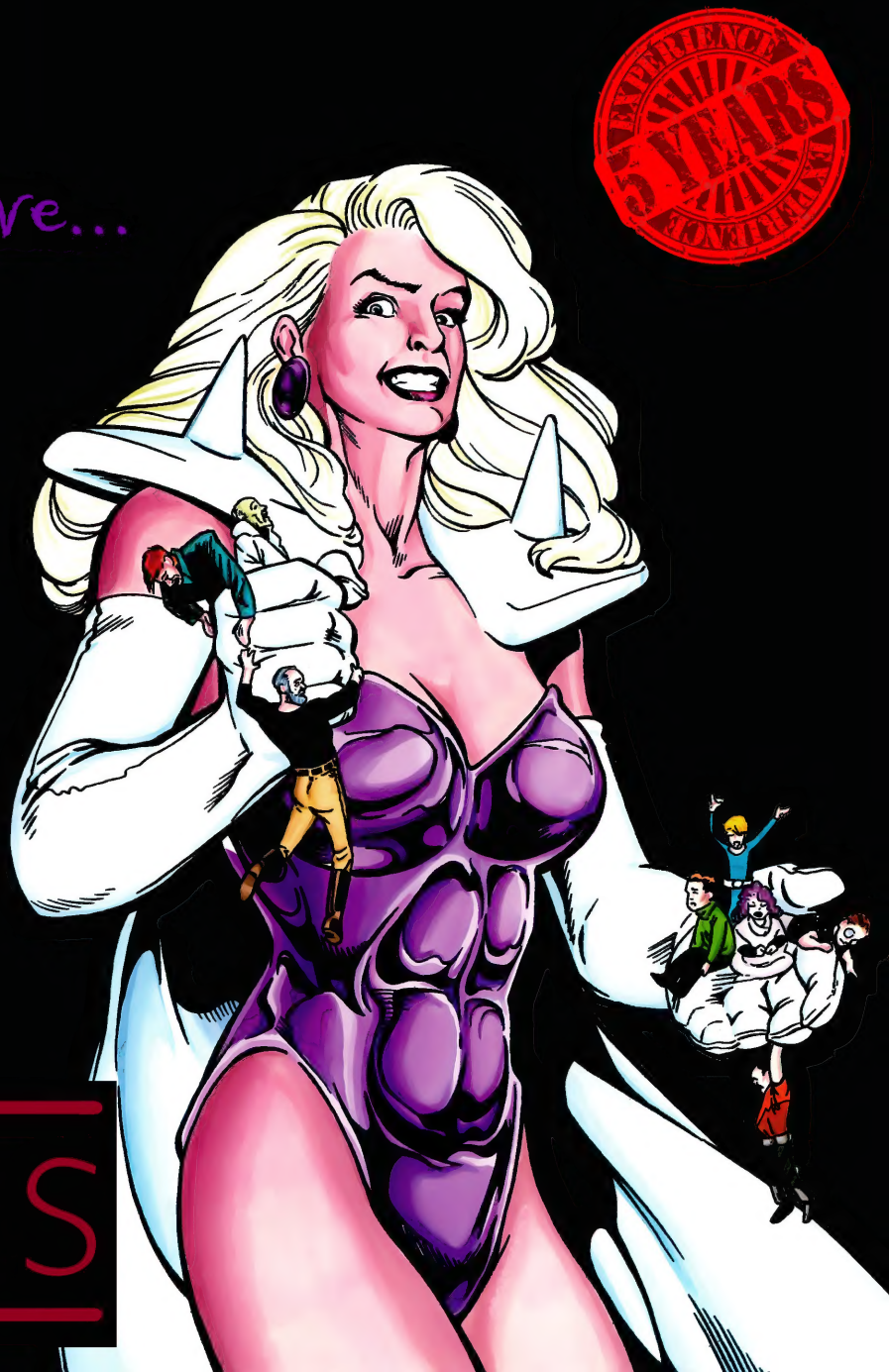
--THERE SHALL BE WAR!

THOUGH YOU *NEED NOT*, L-RON--

NEXT ISSUE:

THE ACCUSED

From Baaldur, with love...



GLORITH

novus